

Removal of 'Perc' Pollution Begins at Former Cleaners

Sandies Dry Cleaners
Little Chute, Wisconsin

September 2011

What is perc?

Tetrachloroethylene is widely used for dry cleaning fabrics and metal degreasing operations. Perc can cause neurological, liver and kidney damage in people when inhaled. Other health effects have been reported but not confirmed by research studies.

Studies on people who operate dry cleaning equipment and are exposed to perc on the job show possible higher risks for several types of cancer.

For more information

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Site documents can be viewed at:

Gerard H. Van Hoof Library
625 Grand Ave.
Little Chute

or on the following web page:
www.epa.gov/region5/cleanup/sandies



The EPA is cleaning up pollution at the former Sandies Dry Cleaner and Laundry.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has begun cleaning up soil and ground water contamination at the former Sandies Dry Cleaner and Laundry, 513 Grand Ave. The cleanup began Sept. 7 and is expected to be completed by the end of the year.

The soil and ground water is contaminated with tetrachloroethylene, or PCE. Commonly known as "perc," this chemical is used by many dry cleaners. In addition, some local homes and businesses may be affected by a process EPA calls "vapor intrusion." This happens when vapors from chemicals in the soil drift up through the ground into homes and businesses, creating indoor air pollution.

The drinking water in Little Chute is safe. It comes from wells in an area unaffected by the perc contamination.

The initial cleanup is focused on digging up contaminated soil and replacing it with clean dirt. The remaining soil will be chemically treated to further degrade any remaining perc. In addition, EPA will clean out the basement, where standing water contaminated with perc was found. EPA may also need to install vent fans and other equipment in the former Sandies and adjacent businesses. This will help remove perc vapors from the air and protect people who live or work in those buildings. EPA will monitor air quality in the area during the cleanup to keep workers and local residents safe.

EPA is working closely on the cleanup with the Wisconsin departments of Natural Resources and Health Services, the Little Chute Public Works and Fire Departments, as well as the Heart of the Valley Metropolitan Sewerage District.

Background

Sandies operated from 1957 to about 2003, using perc as the primary solvent in dry cleaning. The site has been vacant since 2006. Old machinery and other equipment related to laundry and dry cleaning operations are still in the building. There is a vacant apartment in disrepair on the second floor of the building where the current owner says he plans to live in the future.

The building is on Grand Avenue, with a city-owned alley just to the west. The block is bounded on the south by West Lincoln Avenue, and on the north by West Main Street. Two other businesses in the block share brick walls with the former dry cleaner, one on the north side and the other on the south side. Both businesses are operating and both have occupied residences on the second floor.



An EPA contractor uses a mini-excavator inside the small room at Sandies that once housed the dry cleaning operation.

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SANDIES DRY CLEANERS SITE: Removal of 'PERC' Pollution Begins at Former Cleaners

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